

By Doug Walker - WLOX-TV 13, June 7, 2010



GULFPORT, MS (WLOX) - The BP staging area at the corner of Interstate 10 and Canal Road looks like a construction war zone, only this battle could be fought on our beaches.

The amount of equipment is stunning, even to Congressman Gene Taylor, who has traveled to Iraq on several occasions and is used to seeing lots of equipment.

"What I'm seeing here is impressive, that they are taking the steps to be ready to respond should that happen. And we all hope it doesn't happen," Taylor said Monday as he toured the site.

If oil does strike the Mississippi Gulf Coast, officials with BP promise to be ready with any type of equipment that is needed to clean up the oil. George Malvaney is with U.S. Environmental Services.

"We are geared toward beach clean-up with earth moving equipment, equipment that will remove tar balls and oily debris from the beach," Malvaney said.

Even the Coast Guard is involved in the operation of the staging area, which stretches almost

as far as the eye can see.

"We have a lot of people here out working already and others getting ready to deploy as needed to respond to tar balls and also any oil we have coming in," Coast Guard Capt. Scott Schaefer said.

With thousands of people passing the staging area on a daily basis, BP officials hope the sight of all this heavy machinery will send some reassurance to a worried and increasingly doubting public.

"I think for them to see that we've got equipment staged and we've got it ready to go at a moment's notice," BP Spokeswoman Lisa Houghton said. "I hope that it helps them to feel that we're ready to pick up anything that might come ashore."

The Canal Road staging area is one of six sites that have been located on the Mississippi coast, ranging from Waveland to Pascagoula. In addition, several thousand workers have been hired by BP to help clean the coastline if oil does come ashore.